

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY

MARCUS ROBINSON,

Plaintiff,
v.

NO DEFENDANT PROVIDED,

Defendant.

HONORABLE JEROME B. SIMANDLE

Civil Action
No. 16-cv-09112 (JBS-AMD)

OPINION

APPEARANCES

Marcus Robinson, Plaintiff Pro Se
133 State Street
Camden, NJ 08102

SIMANDLE, District Judge:

1. Plaintiff Marcus Robinson seeks to bring a civil rights complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 for allegedly unconstitutional conditions of confinement. Complaint, Docket Entry 1. Although Plaintiff does not name a defendant in the caption or in § I(B) of his Complaint, this Court will construe Plaintiff's Complaint as asserting claims against Camden County Jail ("CCJ"), based on Plaintiff's allegations against "Camden County Jail" in § III(A) of his Complaint.

2. Section 1915(e)(2) requires a court to review complaints prior to service in cases in which a plaintiff is proceeding *in forma pauperis*. The Court must *sua sponte* dismiss any claim that is frivolous, is malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. This action is

subject to *sua sponte* screening for dismissal under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) because Plaintiff is proceeding *in forma pauperis*. For the reasons set forth below, the Court will dismiss the Complaint with prejudice for failure to state a claim. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(b)(ii).

3. Plaintiff's Complaint states: "I was sleeping with urine all around me, little bugs in the room, I slept on the floor with a mat that didn't have air or cussion [sic] four people to a cell jump suit didn't get switched for months. I broke out with a rash it was unsanitized [sic] and there was no justice served." Complaint § III(C). Plaintiff alleges he "caught a boil from the dirty floors." *Id.* § IV.

4. Plaintiff states he "was in there multiple times, the most recent June 2016." *Id.* § III(B).

5. Plaintiff states he is seeking \$3,500 in monetary compensation. *Id.* § V.

6. To survive *sua sponte* screening under 28 U.S.C. 1915(e)(2) for failure to state a claim, the complaint must allege "sufficient factual matter" to show that the claim is facially plausible. *Fowler v. UPMS Shadyside*, 578 F.3d 203, 210 (3d Cir. 2009) (citation omitted). "A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged." *Fair Wind Sailing, Inc. v. Dempster*, 764 F.3d 303, 308 n.3 (3d Cir. 2014).

"[A] pleading that offers 'labels or conclusions' or 'a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.'" *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007)).

7. Primarily, the Complaint must be dismissed as the CCJ is not a "state actor" within the meaning of § 1983. *See, e.g., Grabow v. Southern State Corr. Facility*, 726 F. Supp. 537, 538-39 (D.N.J. 1989) (correctional facility is not a "person" under § 1983). *See* Complaint § III(A) ("Camden County Jail"). Accordingly, the claims against CCJ must be dismissed with prejudice.

8. To survive *sua sponte* screening for failure to state a claim¹, the Complaint must allege "sufficient factual matter" to show that the claim is facially plausible. *Fowler v. UPMS Shadyside*, 578 F.3d 203, 210 (3d Cir. 2009) (citation omitted). "A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct

¹ "The legal standard for dismissing a complaint for failure to state a claim pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) is the same as that for dismissing a complaint pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6)." *Samuels v. Health Dep't*, No. 16-1289, 2017 WL 26884, slip op. at *2 (D.N.J. Jan. 3, 2017) (citing *Schreane v. Seana*, 506 F. App'x 120, 122 (3d Cir. 2012)); *Allah v. Seiverling*, 229 F.3d 220, 223 (3d Cir. 2000)); *Mitchell v. Beard*, 492 F. App'x 230, 232 (3d Cir. 2012) (discussing 28 U.S.C. § 1997e(c)(1)); *Courteau v. United States*, 287 F. App'x 159, 162 (3d Cir. 2008) (discussing 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b)).

alleged." *Fair Wind Sailing, Inc. v. Dempster*, 764 F.3d 303, 308 n.3 (3d Cir. 2014). "[A] pleading that offers 'labels or conclusions' or 'a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.'" *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007)). Moreover, while *pro se* pleadings are liberally construed, "*pro se* litigants still must allege sufficient facts in their complaints to support a claim." *Mala v. Crown Bay Marina, Inc.*, 704 F.3d 239, 245 (3d Cir. 2013) (citation omitted) (emphasis added).

9. Even construing the Complaint as seeking to bring a civil rights complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 for alleged prison overcrowding, any such purported claims must be dismissed because the Complaint does not set forth sufficient factual support for the Court to infer that a constitutional violation has occurred.

10. The mere fact that an individual is lodged temporarily in a cell with more persons than its intended design does not rise to the level of a constitutional violation. *See Rhodes v. Chapman*, 452 U.S. 337, 348-50 (1981) (holding double-celling by itself did not violate Eighth Amendment); *Carson v. Mulvihill*, 488 F. App'x 554, 560 (3d Cir. 2012) ("[M]ere double-bunking does not constitute punishment, because there is no 'one man, one cell principle lurking in the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment.'" (quoting *Bell v. Wolfish*, 441 U.S. 520, 542

(1979))). More is needed to demonstrate that such crowded conditions, for a pretrial detainee, shocks the conscience and thus violates due process rights. See *Hubbard v. Taylor*, 538 F.3d 229, 233 (3d Cir. 2008) (noting due process analysis requires courts to consider whether the totality of the conditions "cause[s] inmates to endure such genuine privations and hardship over an extended period of time, that the adverse conditions become excessive in relation to the purposes assigned to them."). Some relevant factors are the length of the confinement(s), whether plaintiff was a pretrial detainee or convicted prisoner, any specific individuals who were involved in creating or failing to remedy the conditions of confinement, any other relevant facts regarding the conditions of confinement, etc.

11. Further, a mere assertion that Plaintiff was not given a jumpsuit (Complaint § III(C)) is insufficient to set forth a cause of action. Plaintiff essentially complains "of an inconvenient and uncomfortable situation"; however, "'the Constitution does not mandate comfortable prisons.'" *Carson v. Mulvihill*, 488 F. App'x 554, 560 (3d Cir. 2012) (citing *Rhodes*, 452 U.S. at 349); see also, *Marnin v. Pinto*, 463 F.2d 583, 584 (3d Cir. 1972) ("blanket statements alleging bad food and miserable living conditions in the prison" were "naked

statements [that do not] ordinarily merit Federal court intervention").²

12. Plaintiff may be able to amend the Complaint to particularly identify adverse conditions that were caused by specific state actors, that caused Plaintiff to endure genuine privations and hardship over an extended period of time, and that were excessive in relation to their purposes. To that end, the Court shall grant Plaintiff leave to amend the Complaint within 30 days of the date of this order.³

13. Plaintiff is further advised that any amended complaint must plead specific facts regarding the conditions of confinement. In the event Plaintiff files an amended complaint, Plaintiff must plead sufficient facts to support a reasonable

² Under some circumstances, constitutional violations may arise from unsanitary conditions or conditions that create vermin infestations. See *Drumgo v. Radcliff, Sgt.*, 661 F. App'x 758, 760 (3d Cir. 2016) ("Unsanitary prison conditions may result in [a constitutional] violation.") (citing *Young v. Quinlan*, 960 F.2d 351, 364 (3d Cir. 1992)); *Kost v. Kozakiewicz*, 1 F.3d 176, 188 (3d Cir. 1993) ("inmates do have a right to be free of conditions that generate infestations of vermin"). However, Plaintiff has not alleged enough facts to demonstrate that the conditions complained of, for a pretrial detainee, shock the conscience and thus violate due process rights. See *Hubbard v. Taylor*, 538 F.3d 229, 233 (3d Cir. 2008) (noting due process analysis requires courts to consider whether the totality of the conditions "cause[s] inmates to endure such genuine privations and hardship over an extended period of time, that the adverse conditions become excessive in relation to the purposes assigned to them."). Plaintiff also has not alleged that any person acting under color of state law acted with deliberate indifference in creating or failing to address the allegedly unconstitutional conditions. See *Kost*, 1 F.3 at 188.

³ The amended complaint shall be subject to screening prior to service.

inference that a constitutional violation has occurred in order to survive this Court's review under § 1915.

14. Plaintiff should note that when an amended complaint is filed, the original complaint no longer performs any function in the case and cannot be utilized to cure defects in the amended complaint, unless the relevant portion is specifically incorporated in the new complaint. 6 Wright, Miller & Kane, Federal Practice and Procedure 1476 (2d ed. 1990) (footnotes omitted). An amended complaint may adopt some or all of the allegations in the original complaint, but the identification of the particular allegations to be adopted must be clear and explicit. *Id.* To avoid confusion, the safer course is to file an amended complaint that is complete in itself. *Id.* The amended complaint may not adopt or repeat claims that have been dismissed with prejudice by the Court.

15. For the reasons stated above, the Complaint is: (a) dismissed with prejudice as to the CCJ; and (b) dismissed without prejudice for failure to state a claim. An appropriate order follows.

October 19, 2017

Date

s/ Jerome B. Simandle

JEROME B. SIMANDLE
U.S. District Judge